



Miami Art Museum

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Media Contact:  
Gabriel Riera: 305.375.1706  
griera@miamidade.gov

## MAM PRESENTS KENYAN BORN ARTIST IN FIRST SOLO EXHIBITION

### ***Wangechi Mutu—Amazing Grace***

July 22 – October 9, 2005  
New Work Gallery

Miami Art Museum presents the first solo museum exhibition by Wangechi Mutu, a Kenyan-born artist currently living in New York. Mutu's growing, widespread acclaim includes being named as one of this season's "Top 25 Movers, Shakers, and Makers" by *ARTnews* magazine. The exhibition is curated by MAM Assistant Director for Programs/Senior Curator Peter Boswell and will be on view from July 22 to October 9.

Mutu is known for hallucinatory drawings in which she combines collage and ink drawing to create flamboyantly distorted figures that reflect contemporary society's obsession with physical appearance. Her elegantly grotesque figures are assembled with surgical precision from images clipped from sources as diverse as glamour magazines, *National Geographic* publications, coffee table books on "classical" African art, wildlife journals, and motorcycle magazines. Mutu mixes these fragments with hand-rendered ink, acrylic and watercolor passages that recall everything from body wounds to elaborately patterned fabrics.

“Wangechi Mutu has dramatically extended the vocabulary of collage, one of the signature developments of the 20<sup>th</sup>-century art,” says Peter Boswell. “While most collage work emphasizes the clash of dissonant elements, Mutu seamlessly incorporates her collaged fragments with virtuoso passages of hand-drawn elements. The result is an elegant merging of printed and handmade materials.”

Mutu’s Miami exhibition, *Amazing Grace*, is an extended meditation on the slave trade and the travails of displaced populations in South Florida and elsewhere.

Mutu is creating an environmental installation for MAM that combines large-scale drawings, a video projection and dripping bottles. The installation interweaves images of figures, mangroves and the sea, with a recording of the artist herself singing the popular hymn *Amazing Grace* in a variety of different languages. The hymn was written by John Newton, an 18<sup>th</sup>-century slave trader who eventually became a minister in the Church of England and a dedicated abolitionist. “The important thing for me about *Amazing Grace*, which I’ve been obsessed with and researched thoroughly,” says Mutu, “is that it is rooted in the mud and injustices of a dark, convoluted past and yet it has become the most redemptive and ubiquitous of hymns ever...thanks to colonization, missionaries and the translation of the song into every imaginable language.”

In Mutu’s words, the installation evokes “an idea of complex, braided histories and migration patterns, unfathomable survival amidst tormented social relationships, and still the tenacity, beauty and grace of the human spirit and the sea.”

***Wangechi Mutu — Amazing Grace*** is organized by Miami Art Museum and curated by Assistant Director for Programs/Senior Curator Peter Boswell as part of New Work, a series of projects by leading contemporary artists. The exhibition is supported in part by the Peter Norton Family Foundation and the Funding Arts Network, Inc.

## About the artist

Wangechi Mutu was born in Nairobi, Kenya in 1972. She received her International Baccalaureate from the United World College of the Atlantic, in Wales; her BFA from Cooper Union for the Advancement of the Arts and Science, New York (1996); and her MFA from Yale University, New Haven, CT (2000). Her work has been included in such exhibitions as *Pin-Up - Contemporary Collage and Drawing* at the Tate Modern, London (2004); *Fight or Flight* at the Whitney Museum of American Art at Altria, New York (2004); *I Feel Mysterious Today* at the Palm Beach Institute of Contemporary Art, Palm Beach (2004); *Africa Remix* at the kunstpalast duesseldorf, Duesseldorf, Germany, (2004, traveling to the Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris, France, the Hayward Gallery, London and the Mori Art Museum, Tokyo, Japan); *Looking Both Ways*, at the Museum for African Art, Long Island City, New York (2003) and in exhibitions at the Studio Museum in Harlem, New York (2004, 2002) the Weatherspoon Museum, the International Center of Photography (2003), the New Museum of Contemporary Art, New York (2003) and the Johannesburg Biennale (1997). Wangechi Mutu has been awarded residencies at ArtPace, San Antonio, Texas (2004), at the Studio Museum Harlem, New York (2003) and she has received a Jamaica Center for the Arts Fellowship (2001). *Wangechi Mutu—Amazing Grace* is her first solo museum exhibition.

## About the Curator

Peter Boswell has been Assistant Director for Programs/Senior Curator at MAM since 1999. He is responsible for the growth of MAM's permanent collection as well as the museum's exhibitions, educational programs and publications. Since his appointment at MAM, Mr. Boswell has led the curatorial efforts behind the exhibitions *Robert Rauschenberg* (2005); *Figuratively Speaking: Selection from the Permanent Collection* (2005); *Beyond Geometry: Experiments in Form, 1940s–70s* (2004); *Chuck Close Prints: Process and Collaboration* (2004); *Museums for a New Millennium: Concepts, Projects, Buildings* (2003); *Between Art and Life: Joseph Cornell to Gabriel Orozco* (2003); *New Work: Roberto Behar and Rosario Marquardt* (2003); *Miami Currents: Linking Collection and Community* (2002); *New Work: Teresita Fernández* (2002); and *New Work: Donald Lipski* (2002). Prior to joining MAM, Mr. Boswell served for three years as Heiskell Arts Director at the American Academy in Rome and for 10 years served on the curatorial staff of the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis. Mr. Boswell holds a BA in Art History from the University of California, Berkeley, and an MA in Art History from Stanford University.

## **Related Publications and Programs**

### **Gallery Notes**

This illustrated, take-home brochure provides background information on Wangechi Mutu's work and an in-depth examination of the installation. Essay by MAM Assistant Director for Programs/Senior Curator Peter Boswell. Available in the galleries. Free.

### **Opening Reception**

**Thursday, July 21, 5 – 8:30pm**

Join the artist for the opening reception of her exhibition at MAM

DJ, hors d'oeuvres, donation bar

Illustrated talk by Wangechi Mutu, from 6:30 to 7:15pm

MAM members free; non-members \$5.

RSVP via email at [MAMRSVP@miamidade.gov](mailto:MAMRSVP@miamidade.gov) or call 305.375.1704.

### **Sundays are Free at MAM**

12 – 5pm

Guided tours of the exhibition every Sunday at 2pm.

Sponsored by *The Miami Herald/El Nuevo Herald*.

### **Second Saturdays are Free for Families**

Second Saturday of every month, 1 – 4pm

Drop in to enjoy fun, interactive programs. Families of all ages explore MAM together, find inspiration to create works of art, and participate in hands-on activities led by Gallery Teachers and student volunteers.

August 13

#### **Captivating Collage**

Discover the art of Wangechi Mutu in the galleries, then join MAM's Gallery Teachers for the hands-on workshop. Create your own captivating collage inspired by Mutu's intricate imagery!

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### **Media Contact:**

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101 West Flagler St  
Miami, FL 33130  
305-375-3000  
**miamiartmuseum.org**

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\$3 at 50 NW 2nd Ave  
between Flagler St and NW 1st St

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